

■ **What's Up?**

Today marks the first issue of *Merger Update*, a weekly newsletter for the employees and medical staff of Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network (LVHHN) and Muhlenberg Hospital Center (MHC). It will be distributed every Wednesday from now until the merger of the two organizations is finalized, sometime in mid- to late November.

Merger Update will bring you news concerning the activities, discussions and processes that are under way in preparation for the actual merger of Lehigh Valley Hospital and MHC, in the areas of human resources, finance, operations, patient care, marketing and business development, information services, medical staff services and legal services. It will also address the rumors that are certain to surface, and try to carefully sort out fact from fiction. There will also be "A Line or 2 from Lou," authored by Lou Liebhaber, chief operating officer at LVHHN and chair of the transition team that is responsible for the integration, planning and implementation of all merger issues.

The newsletter is intended to keep you up-to-date on the latest developments and discussions that will ultimately guide decisions about how we will work together as a single organization once the merger occurs. But it will not be the only means of communication available to you during this important and exciting time. Managers will receive information on a regular basis that they will share with staff at regular meetings, complete with feedback forms so that your questions, ideas and concerns are shared with the transition team and others in senior management. A hot line has been activated to deal with rumors as they arise; employees and medical staff may call 402-CARE, the issue or question will be researched and a return call will be made. Boxes for questions will also be available at all sites. Employee forums will also be scheduled so staff can address questions directly to leaders of both organizations. And look for special events to celebrate our success once the merger is complete.

■ **Merger Teams**

MHC and LVH decided to merge because of a firm belief that a stronger organization would result, better able to reduce costs and improve community access to the best possible care.

A senior oversight group will guide major policy and program issues related to the transition. Members include: from MHC — Bill Mason, president and CEO; Gavin Barr, M.D., vice president and medical director; and Ron Macaulay, vice president, finance; from LVHHN — Elliot Sussman, M.D., president and CEO; Robert Laskowski, M.D., senior vice president, clinical services; and Lou Liebhaber, COO.

An operations transition team will be responsible for the integration, planning and implementation of all merger issues, except clinical programs



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unless directed by the oversight group and medical staff issues. Members include: from MHC — Ron Macaulay; Jonathan Brenn, COO; Terry Capuano, vice president, patient care; Melissa Wright, director, community relations; Lou Bottita, director, information services; Vince Tallarico, vice president, business development/physician services; Charlie Fenstermaker, assistant vice president, operations; and Dave Dylewski, director, mental health. From LVH — Vaughn Gower, CFO; Harry Lukens, CIO; Mary Kinneman, senior vice president, patient care services; MaryKay Gooch, vice president, human resources; Mary Alice Czerwonka, vice president, public affairs; Stu Paxton, vice president, consumables management; Jim Burke, vice president, operations; and John Hart, vice president, medical staff services. The team will be chaired by Lou Liebhaber.

■ A Line or 2 from Lou

As the transition team begins its work and we move toward the day in November when we can begin to think and act as one organization, I'm struck by the caliber of the people involved. And by that, I mean everyone...every single person who is a part of Lehigh Valley Hospital and Muhlenberg Hospital Center. Your dedication to your work, the competencies that you bring to the important job of caring for our communities have made both our institutions strong and proud. As one, our ability to make a significant difference in the health of the people in the Valley is vast. There are interesting and exciting times ahead for us all.

As true as that is, there is also anxiety and uncertainty. I'm sure each one of you is asking, "What does this mean for me?" The job of the transition team, in collaboration with department managers, is to do the best we can to answer that question whenever possible. The fact is, for a while, there will be far more questions than answers. That's because, legally, we're bound by anti-trust regulations that prevent us from making final decisions or acting as one organization until the merger is finalized in November. But we will be communicating regularly in many ways about the nature of the discussions and preparations that are underway in several areas, and we will routinely seek feedback from you in the form of questions, concerns and ideas that you may have.

As we move ahead, there are some things of which you can be sure. There will be no unilateral decisions about programs, services and personnel. Our goal will be to seek the "best practice" in every respect. In some cases, it may be the "MHC way," in others the "LVH way," and in others, a new way that we create together. But in all cases, ultimately, our decisions will be guided by the key principles of individual respect, fairness, equity and integrity, in the best interests of quality patient care.



Lou Liebhaber
Chief Operating Officer, LVH
Chair, Merger Transition Team

■ Rumor Control

Heard a rumor? Unsure what is fact, what is fiction? Call 402-CARE with your question. You may leave your name and phone number and we'll get back to you individually. Or be anonymous if you wish, and if the issue has general interest, the response will be printed in *Merger Update*.